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I.—A PHYSICAL INTRODUCTION

ROUMANIA owes its name to the rustic Latin speech of the Roman provincials of Moesia and Dacia, impressed on the region in a period before language had acquired its later powers of tenacious resistance to fundamental change. It is true that subsequent contacts gave the local language a large number, perhaps even a majority, of Slavonic words, emphasising the country's links with eastern Europe, but the associations with the west were actively revived in the nineteenth century, when there was also a reaction against the connecting of Roumania with its southern and south-western neighbours as a Balkan State as had seemed natural to those impressed by the results of Turkish rule. These varying links of Roumania are understandable from a study of its physical features. The eastern projecting arc of the Carpathian Mountains and the Transylvanian Alps is, physically, as well as in a large measure culturally, an eastward outpost of western Europe standing out as a mighty rampart over against the south Russian steppe and its continuation into the loess-floored Polish platform. The curve from the Transylvanian Alps southward past the Iron Gates also connects them with the Balkan peninsula.

CENTRAL EUROPE, farther west, includes broken remnants of old (Permo-carboniferous) mountain systems passing through south Ireland, south Wales and south England as well as through Brittany, the Ardennes and the Vosges to the hills of middle Germany between Hannover and Frankfürt-a-M. Brittany lies mainly at low levels but most of the other elements of this old system have been lifted again into the round-shouldered hills, sometimes with extensive remains of old plains now at considerable heights, and usually with deep-cut stream lines that have often worked their way along fault lines. To the south of this old mountain-system stand the Alps, some of which incorporate the results of refolding of older mountain fragments.

THE GREAT ARC of the Carpathians and Transylvanian Alps shows relationships with both these great schemes. Old, Permo-carboniferous mountain blocks were refolded in the upper Cretaceous and again in the early Tertiary period, in the latter of which the Transylvanian platform, between

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V.—PEOPLES AND SETTLEMENTS: THE POST-ROMAN PERIOD

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MOUNTAIN REGIONS are often regarded as the refuges of conquered peoples and the repositories of cultures that once flourished in the plain, but although the highlands of Roumania have, from time to time, absorbed groups of folk for whom the lowlands offered insufficient security, the population of the Carpathian valleys must not be regarded as racial sweepings from the broad human highways of the Steppe. The long period of invasions that followed the withdrawal of the Roman legions from Dacia led to a concentration of Roumanians within the mountain areas of either Transylvania, whence they spread later to reoccupy the plain, or the Balkans, where their descendants, the Vlachs, still maintain their traditional form of life; but, since those early days, their numbers in the former region have been considerably diluted by Saxons and Szeklers who have come in not as refugees but as outposts against Tatar and Turk in what for long remained an eastward frontier zone of western Christianity.

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OUR KNOWLEDGE of events during the Dark Ages is necessarily scanty, but it is clear that settled life on the open grasslands where, indeed, it was possible at all, was subject to constant interruptions. One of these interruptions, the result of Magyar pressure, is of special significance for the history of Roumania from both a political and a cultural point of view. The Magyar invaders of central Europe in the ninth century penetrated far to the west before meeting with any serious resistance. After their defeats at Merseburg in 933 and at Augsburg in 955, however, they fell back towards the Hungarian Plain, and about A.D. 1000 their Szekler advanced guards began to penetrate the hill country of Transylvania. In spite of their comparatively recent Asiatic origin, the Szeklers introduced certain features of western civilisation into their newly-acquired territory, particularly feudalism, which appears to have been the chief concomitant of the Roman Catholicism that they had adopted while in the plain.

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THE spread of Roman Catholicism towards the east brought it into conflict in the eastern Carpathians with the Greek

175 the various families according to their needs. The pastures and forests, however, were kept in the hands of the community.

THE latter part of the thirteenth century was a critical period for these people; the Tatar invasions were over, and the Turkish invasion had not yet begun. Many of the Roumanian peasantry moved out from the mountains and re-established themselves in the foothills of the Carpathians and of the Transylvanian Alps. The pressure from the west was maintained, however, and the Roumanians became organised on a more strictly military basis. Much of the power of the knesi was usurped by the "boyars," a new military aristocracy that arose, whilst the peasants were gradually forced into a serfdom from which they were not emancipated for several centuries. The various kneaseates became united into small states, under the leadership of princes or "voivods," and were welded eventually into the two principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. The success was short lived, however, for by the end of the fourteenth century Wallachia had fallen under the control of the Turks, and Moldavia soon followed.

THE STRUGGLE against the Turkish invaders was long and bitter; the ways through the mountains needed constant vigilance; the necessity for maintaining a united front against a common foe strengthened the communal spirit; and it is not, therefore, surprising that the alien groups in Transylvania should have preserved their individuality to a remarkable degree. This is particularly noticeable in the case of the Saxons, whose settlements to-day are veritable microcosms of Germanic culture (see Plate V).

● [101] ALTHOUGH they originally had a common purpose, these two racial groups of Saxons and Szeklers have remained very different in character, for whereas the Saxons are still very largely confined to the settlements which they established in the early Middle Ages, the political, and to some extent the ethnic, boundaries of the Szeklers have been enlarged from time to time until they now encompass a considerable area of Transylvania.

144 OF the early history of the Szeklers we know but little. Racially they appear to differ somewhat from the Magyars of the plain, and to approximate more to the Roumanians in

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THE ARGEŞ DISTRICT

101 133 THE EXTENDED ROUMANIA that was organised after 1918 includes the old areas of Wallachia, Dobrogea, Moldavia, Bessarabia, Bukovina, Transylvania and Timişoara, of varied allegiance before the World War, but all containing from early historic times onwards a proportion of Roumanian-speaking people. Transylvania is the mountain bastion with the eastern Carpathians as its eastern boundary, the southern Carpathians or Transylvanian Alps as its southern edge, and the western Roumanian Carpathians or Bihor, etc., mountains on its western flank. Its mountainous frame and its hilly interior give it a very decidedly upland character, even if the Olt, the Maroş and the Szamoş, which drain it, have considerable systems of tributary valleys. Outside the bastion to the east Bukovina and Moldavia slope down to the great plain of eastern Europe, of which Bessarabia forms the flank west of the Dniestr. Behind the bastion to the west Timişoara stretches down to the Tisza, and forms the south-eastern flank of the middle Danubian plain. Outside the bastion on the south is Wallachia, sloping down towards the lower Danube, while beyond the considerable barrier formed by the lowest portion of the Danube and to the south-east, is the low plateau area of the Dobrogea.

[113] IN A PREVIOUS study we gave in some measure a picture of rural life in the eastern Carpathians near the border between Transylvania and Moldavia, where the mountains barely reach 1,900 m. (say 6,200 feet), and the highest land is often in great expanses of pasture with deep valleys cut by the rival drainage systems of the two sides, which are separated by a number of passes that may indent the watershed. In the eastern Carpathians Roumanians and Szeklers, respectively Uniate and Roman Catholic, live in adjacent villages, and the former, especially, send flocks and herds to the highland pastures.

121 THIS STUDY is intended to deal more especially with what is thought to be a typical area of rural Wallachia, having an almost entirely Roumanian population attached to the Orthodox Church and living under circumstances differing

121 considerably from those of the eastern Carpathians; this area is the district focusing upon Curtea de Argeş.

101 133 WALLACHIA has already been described as the land stretching from the southern Carpathians or Transylvanian Alps to the Danube. The mountains themselves are largely of metamorphosed rock with flanking Miocene deposits; they are about 40 km. wide with the sharp main ridge (rising at Negoiu to 2,544 m. or 8,331 feet) parallel to the long flanks about 11 km. from the northern and 29 km. from the southern edge. Several rivers have worked their valleys out among the mountains in a direction parallel to the ridge and the edges.

133 THERE ARE huge accumulations of pebbly, often deltaic, outwash beyond the south flank of the mountains, the layers sloping southward and giving sunward dip-slopes separated by small northward-facing scarps, the woods of which contrast with the arable lands on the dip-slopes. This pebbly outwash is deeply dissected by southward-flowing consequent streams, some of which rise in it, while others, like the Argeş, penetrate the mountain wall, making a wild narrow gorge. In the deep valleys of the pebbly material houses shelter from the north winds. The Olt has cut right through the mountains and captured a subsequent river of the northern flank, and its way through the mountains is by a deep valley, which is wider in some sections that are more or less "subsequent" and narrower in others that are rather "consequent." At about 20-25 km. southward from the mountain wall the residual hills of loose material that stand out between the consequent valleys milden down; the amount of alluvium and the breadth of the river valleys increase and it becomes possible to bridge the rivers, so it is at about this distance from the mountains that have grown the towns of Ramnicu Valcea on the Olt and Curtea de Argeş on the Argeş. Ramnicu Valcea is at the last narrowing of the Olt before it begins to braid on a broad alluvial plain, and its site is not easily defensible. The Argeş has terraces near the stream on the eastern side at the bridge, and the river has already swung against this bank some 2 km. north of the bridge. This gives defensible positions as well as facilities for bridging, and helps to account for the historic, if somewhat localised, importance of the town of Curtea de Argeş, the focus of the region of which studies were made.

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RUMANIA & THE RUMANIANS

CHAPTER I

AN HISTORICAL OUTLINE

101 The country known between the two Great Wars as
175 Greater Rumania has had twenty-three centuries of violent and dramatic history. From about 400 B.C., when it was first colonized by Thracian tribes, up to the present day this territory has been the victim of many invasions and the scene of many migrations. It has been conquered and ruled by dozens of races and peoples who have all left their mark upon the country and its inhabitants. To-day the Rumanians form an island of Latinity between the Slavonic peoples and one of the last Asiatic invaders of Europe, the Hungarians. The language and culture of the Rumanians, although containing many elements of Slavonic, Germanic and other origins, are closely related to the civilization of Italy, France and Spain.

175 To the foreigner who visits Rumania for the first time this country and its mixed population seems full of inexplicable and insoluble contradictions. The numerous problems confronting Rumania and the Rumanians in the twentieth century have their roots in the historical development of the past. The issues of the present day cannot be understood or solved unless they are examined in the light of this history. In order to analyse the condition of contemporary Rumania, it is therefore necessary to present a short outline of Rumanian history.